

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Background of Study**

Racial prejudice is an insidious moral and social disease affecting peoples and populations all over the world. It is diagnosed by the cataloguing of its various symptoms and manifestations which include fear, intolerance, separation, segregation, discrimination, and hatred. While all of these symptoms of racial prejudice may be manifest, the single underlying cause of racial prejudice is ignorance. Historically, a race of people is defined as a population with distinguishable biological features.

Racial prejudice is the doctrine which emphasizes the importance of main characteristic of race which is used as a standard to make interaction between individual or groups.(Soekanto,1985:411).

There are many kinds of races such as in America. Usually racism is used to differentiate between white and black skins. The white skins are regarded as superior for all races so the black skins get injustice treatment. The black skins do not have the right to any form of opportunities enjoyed by the white skins. Black skins are seen as the pests that try to pollute the purity and superiority of the white skins. It makes black skins live uncomfortable in America. They want to fight against but they are afraid missing out their jobs.

Assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life. (Gordon, 1963:62)

Assimilation is the substitution of one nationality pattern for another. Ordinarily, the modifications must be made by the weaker or numerically inferior group. (Gordon, 1963:64)

*The Namesake* is a novel by Jhumpa Lahiri. Which was published in 2003 by a mariner book Houghton Mifflin company, Boston, New York . There are 12 chapters and 289 pages in this novel. It is printed in the United States of America. It was originally a novella published in The New Yorker and was later expanded to a full length novel. It explores many of the same emotional and cultural themes as her Pulitzer Prize-winning short story collection Interpreter of Maladies.

Moving between events in Calcutta, Boston, and New York City, the novel examines the nuances involved with being caught between two conflicting cultures with highly distinct religious, social, and ideological differences. The novel describes the struggles and hardships of a Bengali couple who immigrate to the United States to form a life outside of everything they are accustomed to.

The author of this novel is Jhumpa Lahiri. She was born in Nilanjana Sudeshna to Bengali Indian immigrants in London. Jhumpa Lahiri moved with her family to the United States when she was three years old. She grew up in Kingston, Rhode Island and earned a B.A. in English literature from

Barnard College in 1989. She went on to earn an M.A. in English, an M.F.A. in Creative Writing, an M.A. in Comparative Literature, and a Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies from Boston University. From 1997-1998, she held a fellowship at Provincetown's Fine Arts Work Center. Lahiri married journalist Alberto Vourvoulis-Bush in 2001. They had two children: Octavio in 2002 and Noor in 2005. The family currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

In 2003, Lahiri followed up with *The Namesake*, a novel that followed the lives, perspectives and changing family ties of the Gangulis, an Indian couple in an arranged marriage who relocate to America. The work was adapted into a 2007 Mira Nair film starring Irfan Khan and Tabu, with Lahiri acknowledging that she felt a connection to the director's sensibilities.

Lahiri returned to the short-story form via her next literary outing, 2008's *Unaccustomed Earth*, with the title take from an introductory passage found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. With prose focusing on the lives of immigrant clans and U.S.-raised children, including a linked trio of tales at book's end, *Unaccustomed Earth* reached No. 1 on *The New York Times*' best-seller list.

Lahiri is renowned for the finesse and poignancy of her prose, with the ability to subtly, mesmerizingly build an emotional connection to characters. "I hear sentences as I'm staring out the window, or chopping vegetables, or waiting on a subway platform alone," Lahiri said of her writing process in a 2012 interview with *The New York Times*. "They are pieces of a

jigsaw puzzle, handed to me in no particular order, with no discernible logic. I only sense that they are part of the thing."

The Namesake is an interesting story that takes a big theme of identity. This novel tells the story of the lives of two generations of Bengali families who dwelt in the United States. The first generation is represented by a pair Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli, second generation represented by their first son, Gogol. The story stretches along three decades, from 1968 to 2000. (Lahiri, 2003)

The novel opens with the events leading up to the birth of the couple's first child Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli in the United States. In keeping with family tradition, Ashima grandmother who will name their baby, so they agreed to postpone giving the baby's name to a letter of his grandmother who was in Calcutta come. Ashima sending letter to her grandmother. The letter contains the name of a baby boy, a baby girl name. No one knows what is written by his grandmother. (Lahiri, 2003)

Unfortunately when Ashima has spawned, a letter containing the name of the baby yet they receive. Even to arrive when Ashima and her baby should be brought home, the letter contains the name of the administration never came. Until Grandma Ashima amnesia and died, the letter never arrived. The requirement to name the baby before returning home by the registrar in the hospital suddenly in mind Ashoke appears a name for his son. "Gogol". Immediately the infant pairs in note Ashoke and Ashima with the

name Gogol Ganguli. It's a strange names and unusual for Bengali family. (Lahiri, 2003)

Actually it is not without reason Ashoke gave the name to his son Gogol, the name was chosen because there are two historic things in his life. First, Gogol is short for Nikolai Gogol, Russian author who is so admired. Secondly, it reminds his name will be a trauma for Ashoke who would change his life. At the age of 22 Ashoke train accident which caused him almost dead. His body is squeezed between the bodies of the train crash victims barely saved if only he was not holding a tear Nikolai Gogol's short story collection book he was reading. Rescuers found himself when he was waving his hands together tearing the book. (Lahiri, 2003)

His life was saved, though his feet become deformed and leaving trauma in on him. After recovering from his illness, Ashoke is inspired by Nikolai Gogol who traveled to Europe until Palestine in search of identity. He also traveled to America to heal the trauma of the accident that nearly scowled his life. His decision to go to the United States is changing the course of his life. And this is where the story flows between Cambridge, Boston, New York, and Calcutta. Ashima and Ashoke are married with two children, Gogol and Sonia. (Lahiri, 2003)

Gogol who hated the name it bears as a nickname and the official name in a variety of important documents. Shortly before entering the college, with the blessing of his parents, Gogol applies to change the official name of Gogol into Nikhil. Nikhil name is never given by her father when he

enrolled Gogol to kindergarten. For Gogol Nikhil name sounds more common because it can be called "Nick", a common name in America. (Lahiri, 2003)

Since then, the name officially became Nikhil and are Gogol start to lives his life with his new name. Various events experienced by Gogol revealed in this novel, conflicts emerge when he started dating some girl friend. In addition to the inner conflict with himself and his partner that always ended in failure, the relationship Gogol and his family also became much until death Ashoke bring her back with his family. The series of these events will shape the future Gogol, change it, and determine who he really is. (Lahiri, 2003)

Despite living and settled in America for so long they keep doing this daily ritual they usually do in their homeland, as well as an annual tradition that set in Hinduism. These things are often done by the Bengali community who was born in India and settled in America as well as Ashoke and Ashima. Starting from clothing's Ashima who always wore a sari, cook Indian food, regular meeting fellow Bengali family, etc. Thus, even though they already are citizens of American Indian cultural roots still attached within them. (Lahiri, 2003)

Not so with the first generation Indian who was born and raised in America as well as Gogol. In this novel Gogol said to be one among many Indians double identity in America dubbed ABCD (American Born Confused or Conflicted). Although Indian culture inevitably inherent in his blood,

Gogol felt that he was an American, good behavior in school, looking for entertainment, as well as looking for a date, all indicate that he was an American. India is only known as ancestral lands through food, tradition practiced by both parents and visit several times to Calcutta. Through Gogol then Ashoke and Ashima see how conflicts of culture should they face, Gogol who live in the American culture and always keep a distance from the origin, fortunately parents always tried to bridge the distance as possible. (Lahiri, 2003)

The good responses have already written above. *The Namesake* not only leaves good comment but also criticism. Although so many readers love this novel, but one of them, Anna, stated in December 2013. She stated that *The Namesake* is a superb first novel. She also stated that the novel punctuates the cherished memories and life changing events that are now somewhat hazy. A bad comment about the novel and author, Jhumpa Lahiri that she is someone doesn't have real insight into the foreign mentality that isn't superficial or obvious was come from Tatiana in September 2011. She stated that the people who read the novel are people with no knowledge of Indian culture and nothing new for reader here.

There are four reasons why the writer is interested in studying this novel. The first reason is because the novel tells about a boy who has different name from his friends. Because he was embarrassed by the name owned. So he always gets ridicule from his friends. And in the end he understood the meaning of a name given by his father.

The second reason is because the novel tells about racism. The novel tells about Indian's family life in America who gets racism. Then they survive with Indian's culture in America although they get different treatment from American. (Lahiri, 2003: 33-34)

The third reason is because the novel tells about Indian's family who get assimilation life in America. They are an immigrant from India. They want to integrate with the American culture between India without changing the original culture of India. (Lahiri, 2003: 188)

The fourth reason is the writer concerns in studying novel. Novel is one of literary works that informs characteristics, sequence of events of human life. The sociological problems found in the novel are about Indian and American culture. The differences of social culture make many problems in the society in Indian. (Lahiri, 2003: 219)

From the explanation above, the researcher is interested to analyze the meaning of racial prejudice and assimilation in *The Namesake* novel. The study will be analyzed by using sociological theory. So, the researcher entitles this research **RACIAL PREJUDICE AND ASSIMILATION REFLECTED IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE* (2003): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**

## **B. Literature Review**

As long as the writer knows *THE NAMESAKE* novel by Jumphah Lahiri has been analyzed by Erwin Dwi Nurpermadi in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta student (2013) entitled "CONFLICTS OF



CULTURAL VALUES REFLECTED IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE*: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF LITERATURE". He uses sociological study of literature to analyze the data. He focus to conflict of culture values between Indian and American. The results of the data show conclusion and suggestion. First, it shows about the conflict between Indian and American culture different. Jhumpa Lahiri through *The Namesake* novel indicated that Indian culture was brought to America by a family and the resulting clash of cultures. This reflects the problem of a culture and society. Second, sociological analysis indicated that the sociological discusses social author and cultural conditions.

The second is conducted by Waluyo (UI, 2011) entitled "*KEDIRIAN (SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS) SEBAGAI BENTUK IDENTITAS TOKOH DALAM NOVEL KARYA JHUMPA LAHIRI THE NAMESAKE*". He focused on the search for identity that is carried by the characters in the novel. And this thesis uses descriptive and syntagmatic and paradigmatic method as a method to explain and analyze a problem. To analysis uses Erik H. Erikson theory about identity of youth from his book *Identity: Youth and crisis*.

The third is "*THE REPRESENTATION OF INDIAN CULTURE IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S THE NAMESAKE*" conducted by Armeilita (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2012). In the film, the issue of Marxist-Social Feminism is reflected on Rebecca Sharp characterizations. Her four characterizations are charm, quick wit, ambitious, and strong minded. Each of characterizations shows the Marxist-Social Feminism.

First, Charm guide her into the separation of sexuality referring to Social feminism; for Marxist concept that the man who tried to rape her can be categorized as capitalist and Rebecca is a effort that he has everything she has. Second, quick wit means having the intellect that leads her into the separation of intellectuality since Mrs. Pinkertonop presses her to not to have the educational prospect for she is the poor girl and it is as Marxist sees that the people who do not have dignity can't have the educational prospect even though she has wit. Third, her ambitious characterization leads her into the separation of motherliness as the social feminism belief. Separation of mother lines means the every single mother sees her children as her products and wants to make them as the society wants. The last but not least, her strong-minded characterization is consist since she is little girl Where the capitalism leads her own country as the result its characterization leads her life to have the better. This can be seen when the Marxist view of capitalism as the main problem of the oppression of women.

The writer has a different perception to analyze the data. The writer uses sociological approach to analyze the data. The writer focuses on the meaning of racial prejudice and assimilation in *The Namesake* novel by using sociological approach.

### **C. Problem Statement**

Based on the background of the research, the writer purposes a single problem statement. The problem of the research is “How are racial prejudice and assimilation portrayed in *The Namesake* novel?”

#### **D. Limitation of the Study**

In this research, the researcher will focus on analyzing the racial prejudice and assimilation portrayed in *The Namesake* novel by using a sociological approach.

#### **E. Objective of the Study**

There are two objectives of the study in the research, they are:

1. To describe *The Namesake* novel based on structural elements of the novel.
2. To analyze the meaning of racial prejudice and assimilation in Jhumpa Lahiri *The Namesake* novel based on the sociological approach.

#### **F. Benefits of the Study**

The result of this research is expected to give some benefits as follows:

##### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

This study will increase the knowledge of the writer and another student of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta or other University, particularly literary study on *The Namesake* novel by Jhumpa Lahiri.

##### **2. Practical Benefit**

To give more information and understanding for writer and other researcher to analyze novel especially based on Sociological Approach.

## **G. Research Method**

### **1. Type of the Study**

In this research, the researcher uses qualitative research. It is library research while data sources are using literary data. It's purposed to analyze the novel using sociological study of literature. The steps to behavior this research are (1) determining the type of the study, (2) determining the object of the study, (3) determining data and data source, (4) determining technique of data collection, (5) determining technique of data analysis.

### **2. Object of the Study**

The object of the study is racial prejudice and assimilation reflected in *The Namesake* novel (2003) by Jhumpa Lahiri. It's analyzed by using sociological study of literature.

### **3. Type of the Data and Data Sources**

There are two data sources that are needed to do this research, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources.

#### **a. Primary data source**

The primary data source is *The Namesake* (2003) novel written by Jhumpa Lahiri.

#### **b. Secondary data sources**

The secondary data sources are from other sources related to the study, such as website, dictionary, and some books that support the analysis.

#### **4. Technique of Collection**

The methods of collecting data are documentation the picture and note taking with the following steps:

- 1) Reading the original novel for several times
- 2) Determining the character that will be analyzed
- 3) Taking notes of important thing both of primary and secondary data source
- 4) Classifying and determining the relevant data
- 5) Browsing on the internet to search the information that relates with the novel.

#### **5. Technique of the Data Analysis**

The technique used in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis. It concerns with structural elements of the novel *The Namesake* (2003) written by Jhumpa Lahiri. The collected data are interpreted and analyzed in detail by using Sociological approach. Then the writer draws conclusion based on the analysis.

#### **H. Paper Organization**

The research paper organization of “Racial Prejudice and Assimilation Reflected in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*: A Sociological Study of Literature” consists of six chapters. Chapter I is introduction consisting of background of the study, previous study, limitation of the study, problem statements, objective of the study, benefit of the study, theoretical approach, research

method, and paper organization. Chapter II is Underlying Theory. It deals with notion of sociology of literature, major principles of sociology of literature, structural elements of the novel and theoretical application. Chapter III presents the Social Historical Background of American Society in the early twentieth century that consists of social, economic, political, science and technology, cultural and religious aspect. Chapter IV is Structural Analysis of *The Namesake* novel; (1) the structural elements of *The Namesake* novel. It consist of character and characterization, setting, plot, point of view, style and theme, (2) discussion. Chapter V presents the Sociological Analysis of *The Namesake* novel. It consists of social, economic, political, science and technology, cultural and religious aspect. Chapter VI presents Conclusion and Pedagogical implication.